

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 231 698

SO 014 723

AUTHOR Troyna, Barry
 TITLE Multicultural Education: Emancipation or Containment?
 PUB DATE Jan 83
 NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the Sociology of Education Conference: 'Social Crisis, Educational Research and Social Policy' (Birmingham, England, January 3-5, 1983). The document is marginally legible.
 PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
 EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
 DESCRIPTORS *Black Youth; Comparative Education; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Foreign Countries; Literature Reviews; Minority Groups; *Multicultural Education; *Racial Discrimination; Social Mobility; *Underachievement; *Unemployment
 IDENTIFIERS *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

A review of research in the United Kingdom reveals that multicultural education does little to remove the employment obstacles which confront black youth; instead, racist practices operating in the recruitment and selection of labor play a significant part in determining the life changes of ethnic minorities. Multicultural education in the United Kingdom is based on the premise that if the academic performances of black youth are enhanced, then employment opportunities will increase. However, research indicates that of 300 employing establishments in England and Wales, over half did not specify formal qualifications. Those that responded indicated that they would consider applicants without the specified qualifications. Further, black unemployed tend to be better qualified than their white counterparts, a pattern which holds true for young black school leavers. Yet, a South London study reveals that unemployment among black school leavers is three times higher than among white school leavers. Clearly, employment institutions rather than the educational system perpetuate inequality. Informal (word-of-mouth) recruitment strategies exclude black youth from the opportunities available to white youth by maintaining the status quo in the ethnic composition of organizations. Thus, the emphasis on the promotion of minority life styles in the classroom, a key feature of multicultural education, will do little to remove the barriers which block black youths' chances at upward social mobility. (KC)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED231698

BEST COPY AVAILABLE X

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Barry Troyna

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: EMANCIPATION OR CONTAINMENT?

Barry Troyna

SSRC Research Unit on Ethnic Relations
The University of Aston in Birmingham
ENGLAND

Paper presented to the Sociology of Education Conference:
'Social Crisis, Educational Research and Social Policy'.
Westhill College, Birmingham (3-5 January 1983)

sd 014 723

NOT TO BE QUOTED WITHOUT THE AUTHOR'S PERMISSION

The employability of a school leaver is determined largely by the academic qualifications which he or she has obtained at school and since West Indians ... are underachieving at school they will clearly be at a disadvantage in the jobs market.

(Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Minority Group Pupils (Rampton Committee), 1981, p 52).

Education. What good is that to the black man? Qualifications? They mean nothing so long as you're black.

(Black youth quoted in Cashmore and Troyna, 1982, p 16).

'The seeds of racial discord'

'... there is no theory of multicultural education, in the sense of an articulated body of theoretically valid knowledge with scientific characteristics and predictive capacity' wrote James Lynch in the introductory chapter to his book, Teaching in the Multicultural School (1981, p 5). Few would dissent from this view. Yet, despite the inchoate nature of multicultural education, policies and practices which are subsumed under this generic concept continue to proliferate in the UK, and elsewhere. Even as the economic crisis develops and its impact on the education system becomes progressively more severe, multicultural education continues to flourish. Its anomalous position in this respect has been demonstrated most vividly during the past 18 months when an increasing number of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have deployed a relatively large amount of their limited resources to facilitate the implementation of multicultural education initiatives. In June 1982, for example, the Education Officer of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) requested around £60,000 from his schools Sub-Committee to support

his latest proposals for multicultural education reforms. Other LEAs, up and down the country, have embarked on similar, though less ambitious programmes of expansion, all of which have entailed the allocation of a not inconsiderable amount of funding: the setting up of multicultural education units; the appointment of specialist advisers and inspectors; expansion of English as a Second Language (ESL) and mother tongue teaching provision; establishment of initial and in-service teacher training courses, and so on. In short, multicultural education has become the new orthodoxy in the 'progressive' education movement; as one teacher in a Midlands school put it: 'We've had mixed ability; we've gone community, and now its bloody multiculturalism' (quoted in Birley High School, 1980).

It is no coincidence that this flurry of activity has taken place in the period since the civil disturbances rocked virtually every major English city in the summer of 1981. Until then, only ILEA and Manchester Education Committee had formally declared their commitment to multicultural education in Authority-wide policy statements. By late 1982, another 16 LEAs, in a variety of circumstances, had followed this path; along with the ILEA and Manchester LEA they are now publicly affirming the notion of multicultural education and setting up a coherent and unified package of innovations along this line. Broadly speaking, this educational response parallels what took place in the USA after the 1965 'race riots'. Then, as James Banks informs us, a number of reformist measures were introduced which were designed to counteract the 'white bias' in the educational system (particularly in curriculum content) and, consequentially, to improve the academic performance of minority group students (1981, p 20).

These strategies have been characterised elsewhere as the "benevolent multiculturalism" approach and are predicated on two of the assumptions which Brian Bullivant has indentified as 'part of the rhetoric and conventional wisdom of multicultural education'; namely:

- (a) that by learning about his (sic) cultural and ethnic 'roots' an ethnic child will improve his educational achievement;
- (b) the closely related claim that learning about his culture, its traditions and so on will improve equality of opportunity.

(1981, p 236)

Similarly in the UK, concern about the relatively poor performance of black youth (i.e. those of Afro-Caribbean origin) and the almost uncritical acceptance of these two ground assumptions have provided the rationale for educational initiatives which in their broadest sense, claim to take account of the 'racially-mixed and culturally-varied' nature of British society (Cohen and Manion, 1983, p 11). But, it is important to point out that concern about poor performance is not a recent phenomenon; it has a history which can be traced back to the 1960s. Yet, despite repeated demands for the re-appraisal of curricular, organisational and pedagogic procedures along multicultural lines and the decision by a growing number of black parents and community groups to establish their own 'supplementary schools' to provide their children with the skills presumed to be lacking in formal educational institutions, the DES, LEAs and their individual schools stubbornly resisted any changes, at least until very recently. As Sally Tomlinson has noted, a number of interested parties had submitted a total of 228 recommendations for clear, unequivocal policies on this issue between 1973 - 1981, most of which fell on deaf ears: 'These working in multi-ethnic

education', wrote Tomlinson, 'could be forgiven for feeling, to paraphrase Churchill, that never in the field of policy-making have so many recommendations been made to so little effect' (1981, p 150). With one or two notable exceptions, then, the UK education system retained its unswerving commitment to assimilationist approaches to the education of minority group pupils - an approach which demanded the suppression of ethnic and cultural differences in the classroom, characteristics assumed to have the potential to inhibit assimilation (Troyna, 1982).

Why then, did it take the outbreak of unrest in the summer of '81 to precipitate a positive response to this educational issue? Two closely related explanations may be adduced. First, although the relatively low academic performance of black pupils had been identified as far back as the late 1960s, the depressing picture drawn by researchers was mitigated to a large extent by their finding that low performance derived, first and foremost, from newness in the UK educational system. In other words, these were seen as transient problems which would diminish with the passage of time (Little, 1975). By the mid-late 1970s it became clear that this optimistic prognosis could no longer be sustained; in fact, research carried out by Christine Mabey in the ILEA showed that the relatively poor performance of black youth deteriorated as they progressed through their school career (1981). "Underachievement" was a persistent rather than ephemeral trend; according to Monica Taylor's 1981 review on the education of "West Indian" pupils, 'the research evidence shows a strong trend to under-achievement of pupils of West Indian origin on the main indicators of academic performance' (1981, p 216).

The late 1960s and 1970s also saw the growing emergence of a 'moral panic' over black youth (Fisher and Joshua, 1982; Hall, et al 1978) which was, in some senses seen to be closely related to their failure to secure academic qualifications and, hence a job.

As early as 1969, the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration in its report, The Problems of Coloured School Leavers, had typified the youths as a 'social time bomb' which could be detonated by the onset of prolonged and widespread unemployment. The Committee asserted that these youths 'may be less patient in surmounting the difficulties that confront them than their parents have been' and warned that in the continued absence of 'equal treatment', 'the seeds of racial discord may be sown' (1969, pp 6-7). In this scenario, the role of education was heavily stressed: in 1974, for instance, the Community Relations Commission pointed out in its report to the Home Secretary that the educational system was not providing a substantial number of 'young black people with qualifications adequate to meet either their own expectations or the actual demands of adult life' (1974, p 27) and that, 'many schools have not adjusted to the needs of West Indian pupils, but were carrying on as if nothing had changed from when all pupils were indigenous and white' (p 7). In all, the CRC highlighted the vital role assumed by education in contributing to the high incidence of unemployment, homelessness and disaffection among black youth. Nor was the CRC a lone voice; six years later in its submission to the government report, Racial Disadvantage, the DES argued substantially the same point, suggesting that ameliorative action in the form of curriculum amendment was necessary to avert an impending crisis: 'A curriculum which draws positive advantage from different cultures may help to prevent the alienation from school and society

in general of some minority group pupils ... ' (1980, p 240)¹

What happened at Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side and elsewhere in 1981 demonstrated, in the most vivid manner, the pertinence and veracity of these earlier warnings: 'the seeds of racial discord' had come to bloom. Few informed commentators agreed with Mrs. Thatcher's assertion that the disturbances had 'nothing whatever to do with the dole queues' and while the specific precipitating factor(s) may have varied from place to place, Lord Scarman's claim that the problems which black youth habitually encounter in the search for work provided 'a major factor in the complex of conditions which lies at the root of the disorders' seemed an accurate appraisal (1981, p 107).

Against this background, demands for action gained new urgency and a fresh vitality. As we have seen, report after report in the late 1960s and throughout the '70s had pointed to the strong trend towards black educational "underachievement". Now, if we accept the proposition that failure at school contributes directly to the disproportionately high levels of unemployment amongst black youth, which in turn contributed to the disturbances, then the target site for state intervention must clearly be the school. The current willingness of educationists, both at the policy-making level and on the "chalk face" to eschew traditional assimilationist approaches in favour of a cultural pluralist model testifies to the extent to which this proposition has been accepted. Put simply, the fear has been another 'explosion', the solution: enhance the academic performance of black youth, the means: multicultural education.

Put this way, it is clear, as Andy Green has argued, that 'multiculturalism lies in the long tradition of social democratic education' (1982, p 24). In the same way as, say, compensatory education initiatives in the 1960s were designed to repair the meritocratic credibility of schools by providing "equality of opportunity" to pupils of working class origin, so multicultural education, by using similar rhetoric and symbolic political language, aims to ensure that black youth are not short-changed in their schooling. Both rest on the same premise: the liberal-democratic notion of schooling as a means of occupational and social mobility. As the Home Affairs Committee pointed out in their report on Racial Disadvantage:

Disadvantage in education and employment are the two most important facets of racial disadvantage. They are closely connected. Without a decent education and the qualifications which such education alone can provide, a school leaver is unlikely to find the sort of job to which he aspires, or indeed any job.

(1981, para. 126)

In a period when jobs are becoming increasingly scarce, the credential bias of the labour market seems to have been thrown into even sharper relief, and educational qualifications are conventionally ascribed with a determinative role in facilitating access to first and subsequent jobs: 'the lack of credentials, or the possession of a devalued credential tends to bar an individual from any hope of social mobility or promotion' insisted no less an authority than the OECD (1977, p 79). It is this commonsense view of the relationship between success in education and employment spheres which provides the ideological framework within which multicultural education is espoused. Not only is it

conceived as 'the catalyst that would reverse the "underachievement" of black school children', as Hazel Carby puts it (1982, p 197), it is endowed with far greater emancipatory powers. As the Rampton Committee asserted:

The evidence summarised in this section shows that many West Indians are underachieving in relation to their peers, not least in obtaining the examination qualifications needed to give them equality of opportunity in the employment market (1981, p 13. *Emphasis added*)

And James Rushton's appraisal of multicultural education concurred with this:

... the curriculum in the multicultural school should encourage each pupil to succeed wherever he or she can and strive for competence in what he or she tries. Cultural taboos should be lessened by mutual experience and understanding. The curriculum in the multicultural school should allow these experiences to happen. If it does, it need have no fear about the future careers of its pupils (1981, p 169. *Emphasis added*).

On the face of it, multicultural education would seem to have much to offer. After all, the available evidence points to black educational "underachievement" (Nortimore and Motimore, 1981; Taylor, 1980; Tomlinson, 1980); and even if we accept that many of the relevant studies are flawed, both conceptually and methodologically - the overwhelming emphasis on differences (or otherwise) along ethnic lines, for example has led to a recurrent neglect of the profound influence of social class on educational performance - at least two researchers have ensured that their ethnically mixed sample of students were watched for social class. The result? The performance of black pupils in public examinations was lower than for all other groups (Craft and Craft, 1981).

On the other side of the coin, we find that while the chances of any school leaver finding a job are uniformly bleak - irrespective of background - the chances for young black people are even more remote. In some parts of London and Birmingham, for example, black youth unemployment constitutes around 50 per cent and above of those registered unemployed at the local careers office (see Cashmore and Troyna 1983 chapter 4 for details). In addition, the rate of increase of black youth unemployment is significantly higher than for white youths, according to the recent data presented by the Wunnymede Trust (1981, p 3).

The credibility of the multicultural philosophy hinges on the view that these two sets of data are directly and causally related; that is, black "underachievement" in the labour market is attributable primarily to their lack of success in the academic paper chase. From this perspective, the Rampton Committee's claim that enhancing blacks' school performance will ensure that they enjoy 'equality of opportunity in the employment market' seems entirely feasible and an acceptable rationale for intervention. In short, it lends empirical weight to the conception of multicultural education as an emancipatory tool for black youth. Nevertheless, in order to sustain this admittedly attractive argument it is necessary to scrutinize the commonsense notions on which it is based. Firstly, the assumption that school leavers obtain jobs which are commensurate with their levels of ability, as measured by their educational qualifications. And secondly, that school leavers of equal merit have equal chances of success in their search for a job, irrespective of ascribed characteristics such as ethnic background. As we shall see, although there is a relationship between success in education and employment spheres the picture is more complex than the Rampton

Committee and other would have us believe.²

'A series of disparate links'

Since the onset of the present recession in the mid-1970s, young people have been especially vulnerable to unemployment; the causes of this disproportionate rise in **youth** unemployment need **not detain us here (but see Makeham, 1980)**. What is more important in this context is that worsening unemployment has led to an increasingly **widespread acceptance of the "implicit contract" or "tightening bond" thesis**. This thesis holds that the possession of educational credentials affords some protection against unemployment, that a good education leads to a good job and the better the education, the better the job. The corollary, then, according to the OECD is that the position of those who are left aside in the scramble for some sort of credential or label is becoming desperate' (1977, p 79).

Broadly speaking the possession of educational qualifications may be said to represent formally the competence and ability of the holder to successfully perform a given task, or series of tasks. In short, it may be presumed to relate to the concept of skill: as Madan Sarup suggests, ' "schooling" is often connected with "training", the performance of certain "technical" functions' (1982, p 26).

In 1966, Michael Carter was claiming that many school leavers were involved in jobs that 'mentally retarded children could do adequately and perhaps better' (1966, p 167). The tightening bond theory would suggest that this is no longer the case; the fact of the matter is, however, that there remains a wide range of

jobs for the school leaver which require, at best, a minimum level of skill and which, therefore, are only tenuously related to educational qualifications. For instance, in their study of male manual workers in Peterborough in the 1970s, Bob Blackburn and Michael Mann found that 95 per cent of their sample had no formal educational qualifications and that 'almost all workers use less skill at work than they do, for example, in driving a car'. They estimated that: 'in Peterborough about 35 per cent of the workers possess the necessary ability to undertake 95 per cent of these jobs and though these figures might vary in other "unqualified" labour markets we do not consider them atypical' (1979, p 12). Indeed they are not; as recently as 1976-7 about 60 per cent of school leavers in England and Wales entered the labour market with either very low academic qualifications or none at all, according to the Department of Employment (quoted in Hawkins, 1979, p 49).

A number of recent studies have also indicated a lack of uniformity in the way employers respond to formal educational qualifications in their selection processes. Eileen Reid's interviews with recruitment officers in 300 employing establishments in England and Wales, for instance, showed that fewer than half had said that 'they specified formal qualifications and that in all types of jobs except one ... over half of the respondents who reported that educational qualifications were specified said that they would nevertheless consider applicants without the specified qualifications' (1980, p 54). Reid's research, along with a recently completed report on the same issue in Scotland (Hunt and Small, 1981) corroborates David Ashton and Malcolm Maguire's argument that: 'Rather than considering the relationship between education and the labour market as a single tightening bond, ... it may be better to

conceptualize it as a series of disparate links' (1981, p 5). It would seem, therefore, that educational credentials do not constitute the sine qua non of entry into the labour market; what is more, the experiences of black school leavers in their search for work undercuts the tightening bond thesis even further.

In general, the black unemployed, of all ages and both sexes, tend to be better qualified than their white counterparts and this is a pattern which seems to hold true for young black school leavers. Ken Roberts and his colleagues found that amongst the non-registered young unemployed in different parts of the country, black youth tended not only to be better qualified but were also likely to enrol on further education (1981). And a recent study carried out by Muhammad Anwar confirmed at least part of this picture by showing that 46 per cent of white unemployed youth had no formal educational qualifications, compared to 33 per cent of their black equivalents (1982, p 17). On this evidence alone, then, it seems clear that reformist strategies designed to improve the academic performance of black youth will do little to remove the obstacles which confront them in their search for work. Indeed, such measures could exacerbate their problems if Malcolm Cross' interpretation of recent data is to be taken seriously, he suggests that:

... the relatively poor position of the young black unemployed is not confined to the lower echelons of the employment structure. In fact, if the National Dwelling and Housing Survey data are any guide, the opposite is true: the ratio of non-white to white unemployment is highest for young people with non-manual and skilled manual occupations even though the unskilled, from whatever race, suffer higher levels of unemployment (1982, pp 47-8).³

It would seem, then, that the educational experiences of young people are only partially related to either the likelihood, or level of entry into the labour market. For black school leavers this is particularly the case, and the discrepancy between their experiences in the frantic search for a job and those of their white counterparts cannot be attributed in any significant measure to their performance in the academic paper chase. How could it be when, in many cases, those black youth who are currently without a job have overtaken white youth in this chase. Clearly, we have to look elsewhere to account for the high presence amongst the ranks of the unemployed.

'Business as usual'

I have argued elsewhere that racism and discrimination against people perceived of as racial minorities constitute one of the most divisive social facts in the UK (Troyna, forthcoming). Despite the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation in 1965, 1968 and 1976, racist practices operating in the selection and recruitment of labour continue to play a powerful part in the determination of the life chances of black and brown school leavers. Now, it is likely that both this observation and the evidence I shall adduce to substantiate it are already familiar. Even so, I regard their inclusion as more than perfunctory. In the first place, they should be sufficient to undermine what are frequently referred to as 'pathological' conceptions of black youth: the noxious theory that the differentially worse experiences of black youth in the transition from school to work derive either from the fact that their aspirations are unrealistic in terms of their qualifications and that they seek jobs which they have little hope

of obtaining or, that they have no wish to participate in conventional employment spheres.⁴

More specifically, the irrefutable evidence of racialism in this context will help to sustain my argument about the limited role which multicultural education can play in alleviating inequalities. In other words, to assume, as multicultural proponents often do, that the determinants of inequality are within the terrain of education is misconceived.

Soon after the introduction of the first in a series of protective laws to combat racial discrimination, W.W. Daniel in his summary report of the PEP survey into this practice wrote that: 'In employment, housing and the provision of services there is racial discrimination varying in extent from the massive to the substantial' (1968, p 209). Since then, the 1968 and 1976 Race Relations Act have successively extended the range of anti-discrimination laws although their success in eliminating racialism in the labour market remains limited. For instance, recent studies carried out by the Commission for Racial Equality in South London and Nottingham demonstrated unequivocally the extent to which employers discriminate against black and brown school leavers in their selection process (CRE, 1978; Hubbuck and Carter, 1980). In the South London study the CRE found that unemployment among black school leavers was three times higher than among white school leavers, a discrepancy which could not be accounted for either by differences in qualifications or differential attempts to find a job. Clearly, the refusal to offer black candidates an interview, purely and simply because of skin colour, constitutes the most obvious form of direct, self-conscious discrimination. Slightly

more subtle, though certainly no less invidious, is employers' predilection towards stereotyping based on the ascribed characteristics of interviewees; 'this represents one of the most intractable problems', write Ed Rhodes and Peter Braham, 'because the influence of ascriptive criteria is often hard to identify' (1981, p 376). These factors, alone, are often sufficient to disadvantage black candidates in the selection process but it is also important to point out that racism, embedded in the group network at the workplace, is also often invoked by employers as a rationale for the non-appointment of blacks, and the CRE's recent investigation into the recruitment practices of British Leyland in Birmingham revealed the persistent use of this rationale for discrimination (1981).

The significance of these practices is highlighted when considered alongside my earlier contention that in their selection procedures, employers often subordinate the importance of formal educational qualifications to more subjective, non-academic criteria such as suitability and reliability. As Richard Jenkins concluded from his study of recruitment procedures in the West Midlands: 'in as much the procedure is completely - or nearly completely - informal, it allows discrimination room to operate with a certain amount of impunity' (1982, p 16).

The 1976 Race Relations Act differentiated between direct and indirect discrimination; the former refers to those self-conscious and volitional practices such as those just described. In contrast, indirect discrimination refers to treatment of "racial" groups which in a formal sense may be equal but which is discriminatory in effect. In other words, indirect discrimination can occur without any direct reference to attitudinal factors or

individual prejudices. In the UK, such practices and procedures may be said to constitute institutional racism, as defined by A.K. Spears:

Since it is institutionalized, all cases of racism do not result from the willful acts of ill-intentioned individuals. It is in its most profound instances, covert, resulting from acts of indifference, omission and refusal to challenge the status quo. Thus, an individual need never have willfully done anything that directly and clearly oppresses minorities, she/he need only have gone about business as usual without attempting to change procedures and structures in order to be an accomplice in racism, since business as usual has been systematized to maintain blacks and other minorities in an oppressed state (1978, pp 129-30).

In short, by conforming to the operating norms of the organization and by going about their business as usual, employers allow the institution to perpetuate inequality. In this context, the tendency for employers to rely on informal channels, or 'word of mouth' networks of recruitment represents one of the main ways in which the potential of blacks to enter the labour market is systematically inhibited. Let me develop this briefly.

Quite clearly, the use of particular recruitment channels has important implications for the degree of openness of the labour market. Although the extent to which 'word of mouth' recruitment operates may vary between organisations, even from manager to manager within the same organisation, it would seem that in the current situation of increased competition for vacancies and, the scarcity of financial resources, it is becoming an increasingly popular mode of practice (Manwaring and Wood, 1982). Its advantages over formal recruitment procedures via, say, Job Centres, Careers Offices and newspaper advertisements are difficult to deny. First, it minimizes the uncertainty associated with the recruitment

process; second, it keeps the cost of recruitment to a minimum. Finally, according to at least one study, it complies with the demands of the trade unionists that: 'employees' families get preferential treatment' (Lee and Wrench, 1981, p 8). All in all, then, Manwaring and Wood's claim on the basis of their research into recruitment practices would seem a fair appraisal of the situation: 'Currently in many firms the chances of a complete 'outsider' getting a job in the near future, even given vacancies, seems to many of our personnel managers very remote' (1982, p20).⁵

At first glance, it is not immediately clear why the development of an extended internal labour market through increasing reliance on informal recruitment channels should work to the detriment of black school leavers; but it does. Partly this is due to the relatively greater reliance of young blacks (and other ethnic minorities) on the statutory services. This differential use of job search methods effectively excludes black youths from the range of job opportunities available to white youngsters. As Shirley Dex points out; in contrast to young blacks, 'whites appeared to draw on the contacts and information of family and friends to secure jobs' (1982, p 20). The continuation of this process, the adherence to a 'business as usual' approach in other words, will also ensure that there is a status quo in the ethnic composition of an organisation as well as the reproduction of a black labour force in the lower levels of the employment market. The evidence, then, is irrefutable: disadvantage in trying to get work is being reproduced among the offspring of black migrants born and educated in the UK.

The romantic vision of society

Banks has defined multicultural education as 'a generic concept that implies systematic school reform' (1981, p 55). Because of its diffuse nature, multicultural education permits a range of interpretations and practices. Nevertheless, in its most popular form the imperative is clear: improve the academic performance of black youths to ensure that they will not confront any barriers, over and above those faced by white youths, in the realisation of their life chances. Proponents of multicultural education conventionally takes as their starting point the unassailable view that the norms and values of UK society are racist and that these permeate the education system in the form of an Anglo-centric curriculum and via the disparaging and offensive representation of other cultures in teaching materials. It is contended that these disable the group- and self-identity of minority group pupils, reduce their interest in classroom matters and negatively affect their performance in public examinations. Armed with few, if any, academic qualifications their chances of gaining entry into the labour market are deeply impaired. Equality of opportunity, the moral "buzz word" of multiculturalists, can only be attained if academic results are improved; the re-appraisal of curricular and teaching materials so that they reflect minority groups more positively will, they contend, restore black pupils' interest and motivation, provide them with the confidence to pass examinations and place them on an equal footing with white school leavers in their search for work.

The proponents of this new orthodoxy suggest, either implicitly or explicitly, in their formulation of policies and

practices that the disadvantages of black youth derive largely, if not entirely, from cultural and/or identity deficiencies. In so doing, these proponents have lost sight of the original premise on which their proposals rest: namely, that the UK is a society which is suffused with racism. It is this unassailable fact and not differential academic performance which inhibits the life chances of young blacks. As Brian Bullivant has argued, the emphasis on the promotion of minority life styles in the classroom, a key feature of multicultural education, will do little to remove the barriers which block black youths' chances of upward social mobility:

Naive, romantic pluralists contribute to the problem when they stress educational programmes and curricula that emphasize only life style concerns. This is easy to do, as they appeal to the vision of society that stresses its 'niceness' and one-big-happy-family 'holism', rather than the competitive nastiness of the real world. This is far less romantic, but much more pertinent for education (1981, p 233).

The refusal by the Schools Council to publish Dawn Gill's report, Assessment in a Multicultural Society: Geography (1982) precisely because it focused on racism and the 'competitive nastiness of the real world' constitutes the latest example in the routine attempt to confine the multicultural education debate to 'romantic' and innocuous issues (Dorn and Troyna, 1982).

It is not difficult to see why; to admit to the debilitating effect of racism on life chances would undermine the ideological notion of schooling as a **good** thing. Instead, by structuring blacks' perceptions of their disadvantage in terms of cultural and identity deficits and by formulating educational programmes designed to reduce those deficits, multiculturalists contain and defuse the

potential for resistance.

Whether this coercive strategy is succeeding, however, is another matter. Sarup, for instance, has argued that youth unemployment, in general, poses serious problems for the state because: 'If after "fifteen thousand hours" at school there is no job, the usefulness of schooling, and the nature of society, will be increasingly questioned' (1982, p 31). One headteacher recently admitted such doubts are already beginning to surface among 'thinking fourth and fifth formers' (quoted in O'Connor, 1982). And, for some time now, a handful of contributors to the debate about black educational "underachievement" have suggested that the employment difficulties which these youths are likely to face when they leave school have an influence backwards on their motivation to succeed at school and, consequently, on their levels of academic performance. As Green puts it: poor performance is likely to have derived from 'the alienation and demotivation that results from the knowledge that schooling and educational qualifications have little pay-off for those whose future at work will most likely be decided on the colour of their skin, regardless of merit' (1982, p 33). The research of Anwar (1982) and George Gaskell and Patten Smith (1981) provides empirical support for this argument by showing that a large number of black youths, though retaining a commitment to the work ethic, accept that racism is likely to impede seriously any chance of realising their aspirations.⁶ As one black schoolgirl put it to the researcher, Kathryn Riley: 'if a white person and a black person went to the same school and got the same degrees, the white person is entitled to get (the job) more than the black; I mean, we're all classed as stupid' (1982, p 12). Her observation succeeds in placing multicultural education in its proper perspective.

Education does not take place in a social vacuum and any benefits which may derive from initiatives designed to improve the academic performance of black pupils are likely to be nullified by the ubiquitous fact of racial discrimination in the transition from school to work.

Recent criticisms of multicultural education have, in general, either followed Chris Mullard's contention that it sanctions divisions along ethnic lines (1981) or, focused on Maureen Stone's provocative claim that the new orthodoxy is likely to exacerbate rather than alleviate black inequality. Stone argues that educationists should not be concerned with attaining 'mental' goals but should concentrate on 'teaching methods associated with skills and knowledge and the development of abilities' (1981, p 254). In this paper I have not engaged in either of these debates; instead, my intervention has developed along a different trajectory which has established first, the differential experiences of black and white youth in the transition from school to work and the second, the importance of labour market processes as a determinant of life opportunities. It is in this context that the efficacy of ascribing multicultural education with emancipatory powers can most realistically be considered. Unfortunately, the crucial link between multicultural education and the labour market has consistently been overlooked and this has led, therefore, to an impoverished appraisal and analysis of the issue.

From this vantage point, it seems that multicultural education may enjoy some success as a strategy of containment by persuading pupils and parents (as well as teachers) that education remains the main distributor of life chances and that by tinkering

with educational methods and techniques black youth will obtain better results and attain equality of opportunity. The reality of the labour market suggests otherwise: and as an emancipatory tool for black youth, multicultural education is doomed to fail.

FOOTNOTES

David Ashton, Roger Dickinson and Richard Jenkins all made helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Responsibility for the final version is entirely my own, however, and the views expressed are not necessarily those of the SSRC or my colleagues at the Research Unit on Ethnic Relations.

- 1 Andy Green has made a similar point in **suggesting** that these and related issues provided the leitmotif of official reports during the 1960s and 1970s. He writes that: 'Concern over classroom disruption by black pupils, violence, rejection of school mores, lack of work motivation has always been more or less explicit in DES and Select Committee reports on race and education' (1982, p 23).
- 2 Naturally, education qualifications are important as a prerequisite for some jobs, especially those in the higher echelons of the labour market. Without qualifications, school leavers are unable to enter the race for these jobs. Even so, the possession of qualifications does not ensure success in this race and, as I shall demonstrate, this is particularly so for black youth.
- 3 Similarly, Gloria Lee and John Wrench have shown that by staying on an extra year at school to take further examinations (which, it is hoped, will enhance chances of obtaining apprenticeships) actually disqualifies youths from consideration for these schemes. By the time s/he has left school in the sixth form, the youngster will be too old for an apprenticeship (1981). 25

- 4 The articles which Douglas Smith and I have compiled for our forthcoming reader for the National Youth Bureau, Racism, School and the Labour Market, undermine this 'pathological' explanation of black youth unemployment even further.

- 5 The CRE's recently completed investigation into the under-representation of black workers at Massey Ferguson Perkins Limited reaffirms this argument. The Commission concluded that the low number of black workers at the company's Banner Lane plant in Coventry (10 out of 6,800 employees in 1975) was primarily due not to direct discrimination but to 'the company's method of recruitment for hourly-paid jobs. They did not advertise or use Job Centres' (1982, p 1). The CRE also found that all jobs covered by union agreement 'were advertised internally throughout the plant, and over half of all vacancies were filled in this way, especially clerical and engineering posts' (p 18).

- 6 In the USA, Sethard Fisher found that the idea of 'blocked opportunities' was a contributing factor towards the high incidence of 'anomie' amongst black high school students (1981).

Anwar, M. (1982), Young People and the Job Market - A Survey, London, CRE.

Ashton, D. and Maguire, M. (1981), 'Employers' perceptions and use of educational qualifications', Educational Analysis, Vol 8, No 2, pp 25-37.

Banks, J. (1981), Multiethnic Education: Theory and Practice, Boston, Allyn and Bacon.

Birley High School, (1980), Multicultural Education in the 1980s, Manchester, Manchester Education Authority.

Blackburn, R.M. and Mann, M. (1979), The Working Class in the Labour Market, London, Macmillan.

Brooks, D. (1975), Race and Labour in London Transport, London, OUP for the Institute of Race Relations and the Acton Society Trust.

Bullivant, B. (1981), The Pluralist Dilemma in Education, Sydney, Allen and Unwin.

Carby, H.V. (1982), 'Schooling in Babylon', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, The Empire Strikes Back, London, Hutchinson, pp 183-211.

Carter, M. (1966), Into Work, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Cashmore, E. and Troyna, B. (1982), 'Black youth in crisis' in E. Cashmore and B. Troyna (eds), Black Youth in Crisis, London, Allen and Unwin, pp 15-34.

Cashmore, E. and Troyna, B. (1983), Introduction to Race Relations, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1983), Multicultural Classrooms, Beckenham, Croom Helm.

Commission for Racial Equality (1978), Looking for Work: Black and White School Leavers in Lewisham, London, CRE.

Commission for Racial Equality (1981), BL Cars Ltd: Report of a Formal Investigation, London, CRE.

Commission for Racial Equality (1982), Massey Ferguson Perkins Ltd: Report of a Formal Investigation, London, CRE.

Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Ethnic Minority Groups, (1981), West Indian Children in Our Schools, (Interim Report), London, HMSO, Cmd. 8273.

Community Relations Commission, (1974), Unemployment and Homelessness: A Report, London, CRC.

Craft, M. and Craft, A.Z. (1981), The Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Further and Higher Education, Summary and Conclusion of a Report, London, Nuffield Foundation.

Cross, M. (1982), 'The manufacture of marginality' in E. Cashmore and B. Troyna (eds), Black Youth in Crisis, London, Allen and Unwin, pp 35-52.

Daniel, W.W. (1968), Racial Discrimination in England, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Dex, S. (1982), 'Black and white school leavers: the first five years of work', Department of Employment Research Paper 33, London, DOE.

Dorn, A. and Troyna, B. (1982), 'Multiracial education and the politics of decision-making', Oxford Review of Education, Vol 8, No 2, pp 175-185.

Fisher, G. and Joshua, H. (1982), 'Social policy and black youth', in E. Cashmore and B. Troyna (eds) Black Youth in Crisis, London, Allen and Unwin, pp 129-142.

Fisher, S. (1981), 'Race, class anomie and academic achievement: a study at the High School level', Urban Education 1 Vol 16, Part 2, pp 149-173.

Gaskell, G. and Smith, P. (1981), 'Are young blacks really alienated?' New Society, 14 May, pp 260-261.

Gill, D. (1982), Assessment in a Multicultural Society: Schools Council Report: Geography, unpublished.

Green, A. (1982), 'In defence of anti-racist teaching' Multiracial Education, Vol 10, No 2, pp 19-35.

Hall, S., Critcher, D., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts B. (1978), Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order, London, Macmillan.

Hawkins, K. (1979), Unemployment, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

House of Commons (1981), Fifth Report from the Home Affairs Committee Session 1980-1981: Racial Disadvantage (Vol 1), London, HMSO.

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Race Relations and Immigration Sub-Committee (1980), Session 1979-80: Racial Disadvantage: Minutes of Evidence, DES, London, HMSO.

Hubbuck, J. and Carter, S. (1980), Half a Chance: A Report on Job Discrimination Against Young Blacks in Nottingham, London, CRE.

Hunt, J. and Small, P. (1981), Employing Young People: A study of Employers' Attitudes, Policies and Practices, Edinburgh, Scottish Council for Research in Education.

Jenkins, R. (1982), Acceptability, Suitability and the Search for the Habituated Worker: How Ethnic Minorities and Women Lose Out, paper presented to the conference, 'The management and mismanagement of labour', University of Loughborough (29 September).

- Lee, G. and Wrench, J. (1981), In Search of a Skill: Ethnic Minority Youth and Apprenticeships (Summary Report), London, CRE.
- Little, A. (1975), 'Performance of children from ethnic minority backgrounds in primary schools', Oxford Review of Education, Vol 1, No 2, pp 117-135.
- Lynch, J. (1981), 'Educational theory and practice of multi-cultural education' in J. Lynch (ed), Teaching in the Multi-Cultural School, London, Ward Lock, pp 5-10.
- Mabey, C. (1981), 'Black British literacy', Educational Research, Vol 23, No 2 pp 83-95.
- Makeham, P. (1980), 'Youth unemployment', Department of Employment Research Paper 10, London, DOE.
- Manwaring, A. and Wood, S. (1982), Recruitment and Recession, paper presented to the conference, 'The management and mismanagement of labour', University of Loughborough (29 September).
- Mortimore, P. and Mortimore, J. (1981), 'Achievement in schools III: ethnic minorities', ILEA Research and Statistics Report, London, ILfA.
- Mullard, C. (1981), 'The social context and meaning of multicultural education', Educational Analysis, Vol 3, No 1, pp 97-120.
- O'Connor, M. (1982), 'Work is no longer even mentioned as an option', The Guardian 19 October, p 11.
- OECD, (1977), Selection and Certification in Education and Employment, Paris, OECD.
- Reid, E. (1980), 'Young people and employment (i): employers' use of educational qualifications', Educational Policy Bulletin, Vol 8, No 2, pp 49-64.

- Riley, K. (1982), 'Black girls speak for themselves', Multiracial Education, Vol 10, No 3, pp 3-12.
- Rhodes, E. and Braham, P. (1981), 'Black workers in Britain: From Full employment to recession' in P. Braham, E. Rhodes and M. Pearn (eds), Discrimination and Disadvantage in Employment, London, Harper and Row/The Open University, pp 365-395.
- Roberts, K., Duggan, J. and Noble, M. (1981), 'Unregistered youth unemployment and outreach careers work', Department of Employment Research Paper 31, London, DOE.
- Runnymede Trust, (1981), Employment, Unemployment and the Black Community, London, Runnymede Trust.
- Rushton, J. (1981), 'Careers and the Multi-cultural curriculum' in J. Lynch (ed), Teaching in the Multicultural School, London, Ward Lock, pp 163-170.
- Sarup, M. (1982), Education, State and Crisis: A Marxist Perspective, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Scarman, Lord (1981), The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981, London, HMSO, Cmnd 8427.
- Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration (1969), The Problems of Coloured School Leavers, London, HMSO.
- Spears, A.K. (1978), 'Institutional racism and the education of Blacks', Anthropology and Education Quarterly, Vol 9, No 2, pp 127-136.
- Stone, M. (1981), The Education of the Black Child in Britain, London, Fontana Books.
- Taylor, M. (1981), Caught Between: A Review of Research into the Education of Pupils of West Indian Origin, Windsor, NFER-Nelson.

Tomlinson, S. (1980), 'The educational performance of ethnic minority children', New Community, Vol 8m No 3, pp 213-235.

Tomlinson, S. (1981), 'Inexplicit policies in race and education', Educational Policy Bulletin, Vol 9, No 2, pp 149-166.

Troyna, B. (1982), 'The ideological and policy response to black pupils in British schools' in A. Hartnett (ed), The Social Sciences in Educational Studies, London, Heinemann Educational Books, pp 127-143.

Troyna, B. (forthcoming), 'Multiracial education: just another brick in the wall?' New Community, Vol 10, No 3.

Troyna, B. and Smith, D. (1983) (eds) Racism, School and the Labour Market, Leicester, National Youth Bureau.